DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 081 720 SP 006 798

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TITLE Teacher Education Centers: The CMTEC Centers.
INSTITUTION Central Minnesota Teacher Education Council, St. Cloud.
PUB DATE Oct 73
NOTE 10p.

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.65 HC-$3.29
DESCRIPTORS Clinical Experience; *College School Cooperation; Student Teachers; *Student Teaching; *Teacher Centers; Teacher Role; Teacher Supervision

ABSTRACT

Central Minnesota Teacher Education Council (CMTEC) Centers are public school districts under contract with CMTEC who designate "cluster buildings" that serve a minimum of 10 student teachers per quarter each. In all CMTEC Centers, emphasis is placed on providing opportunities for student teachers to teach under guidance in both major and minor fields, to demonstrate an understanding of the role of the professional teacher in school and community, and to perform effectively in this role. This means each student teacher is gradually inducted into the duties of the professional teacher through a series of continuous and meaningful experiences that vary according to the specific needs and talents of the individual. Student teachers live in the communities in which they are student teaching, devoting full time to their assignments for a minimum of one quarter. Supervising teachers are chosen on the basis of their past teaching performance, human relations skills, and demonstrated interest in teacher education. Courses in supervision are offered in the centers for graduate credit. In turn, the supervising teacher and student teacher are encouraged to function as a teaching team. (This document is a section from the soon-to-be-published book "Readings in Student Teaching.") (Authors/JA)

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TEACHER EDUCATION CENTERS: THE CMTEC CENTERS

by

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It becomes increasingly apparent as one surveys the literature on Teacher Education Centers (Maryland -1, Kanahua County -2, Atlanta Area -3) that the prime requisite for a successful center is that it meets the specific needs of the given locale in addition to emphasizing quality and standardized procedures that help insure effective field experiences. There must be opportunities to develop sequential learning activities, examine them objectively, evaluate them in terms of specified goals, and identify and try alternate ways of accomplishing the goals. But on this base, the needs of a specific area must be assessed and programs developed which utilize the resources, personnel and facilities of that area.

The Central Minnesota Teacher Education Council (CMTEC) Centers borrowed their basic design from the Maryland Plan (1); yet, they have found the only way to provide the kinds of programs needed in Minnesota is to be unique in themselves and sensitive to the needs there. This article will be devoted primarily to those unique aspects.

Undoubtedly, the most distinguishing feature of CMTEC Centers is the established, cooperative organizational structure in which they were developed. (Refer to the chapter on CMTEC for a detailed description of the structure). Key words that describe CMTEC Centers would include cooperative decision-making, teamwork, direct involvement at all levels of the professional ladder, and mutual respect between public school and college faculty.

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THE BASIC PROGRAM

In all CMTEC Centers, emphasis is placed on providing opportunities for student teachers to teach under guidance in both their major and minor fields, to demonstrate an understanding of the role of the professional teacher in the school and community, and to perform effectively in this role.

This means each student teacher is gradually inducted into the duties of the professional teacher through a series of continuous, meaningful experiences that vary according to the specific needs and talents of the individual. Guidance in understanding, developing teaching skills, and evaluating is provided through the cooperative efforts of supervising teachers, college supervisors, administrators, subject matter consultants, and center coordinators.

Student teachers live in the communities in which they are student teaching, devoting full time to their assignments for a minimum of one quarter. Each one works with a minimum of two supervising teachers besides observing several others.

Supervising teachers are chosen by school administrators and college supervisors working together, based on their past teaching performance, human relations skills, and demonstrated interest in teacher education. Emphasis is placed on the college supervisor and supervising teacher serving as a teaching team to provide general teaching analysis skills along with subject matter expertise for the student teacher. Courses in Supervision are offered in the centers for graduate credit.

In turn, the supervising teacher and student teacher are encouraged to function as a teaching team in all phases of planning and teaching throughout the assignment, with the student teacher assuming greater responsibility on the team as the quarter progresses. This not only provides more opportunities to discuss and analyze the teaching process as it is happening, but also insures more effective instruction for students throughout the quarter.

Continuous communication between all parties involved in the student teaching program is expected and encouraged at all levels. College supervisors and supervising teachers confer after each observation in addition to any time specific needs arise. Written records are kept which are shared equally with concerned professionals and student teachers. Assignments are only changed or cancelled after the college supervisor, supervising teachers, building principal, center coordinator and student teachers have conferred; however, the final decision for these changes rests with the building principal or the center coordinator who decide if they believe the change will be beneficial to the student or the school.

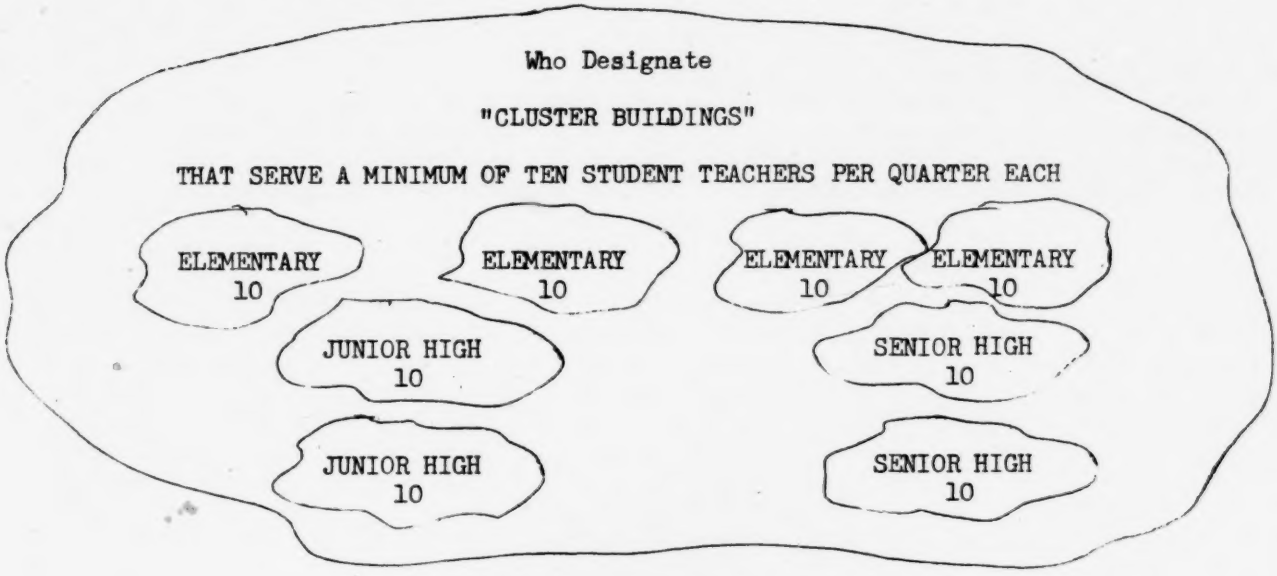
Finally, the responsibility for the evaluation of the experience is shared equally by the college supervisor and supervising teachers, and is done in terms of demonstrated growth in understandings and abilities needed to assume the responsibilities of a beginning professional teacher.

CENTRAL MINNESOTA TEACHER EDUCATION COUNCIL
(CMTEC)

CENTERS

ARE

Public School District Under Contract with CMTEC



Personnel Includes:

Director of Student Teaching - administers the entire student teaching program at St. Cloud State College

Center Coordinator - administers the program for the college within a center by working closely with district administrators and teachers

District Coordinator - designated by the superintendent to work with the Center Coordinator in administering the program within the center.

Joint Appointment Supervisors - outstanding supervising teachers chosen to assume the responsibilities of a college supervisor for an agreed upon period of time by the college and the district. They keep all district employee benefits and are also listed on the college faculty.

Supervising Teachers - teachers in the cluster buildings working with student teachers regularly and involved in supervision courses offered by the college besides other workshops to improve supervision skills.

College Consultants - methods instructors from the college who visit the center approximately once per quarter to observe student teachers in their particular area, and visit with supervising teachers and administrators about common concerns and interest.

Figure 1.

Although all CMTEC Centers meet the basic principles established cooperatively by public schools and the college for the total St. Cloud State College student teaching program, each is somewhat different in it's organizational structure and function depending on the size, location, resources, and problems in that particular district. Because of this, emphasis is placed on visitation and cooperative exchanges between the Centers. Usually Center personnel present a seminar or an opportunity to question and share ideas during these exchanges.

Distinguishing Features of CMTEC Centers

One distinguishing feature of CMTEC Centers is the fact they are entire public school districts that have made a commitment to teacher education. (See Figure 1) Although the Centers range in size and location, each was chosen for excellence in instruction in addition to having something significant to offer in terms of outstanding field experiences. These features include a multi-racial population, facilities for special education students such as orthopedically handicapped facilities, an extensive consultant system that supplements classroom instruction, television or other information media facilities, open classrooms, team teaching, ungraded instruction, individually guided education, modular scheduling and particularly noteworthy self-contained classrooms.

Cluster Buildings

Within each Center, one or more buildings have been designated as "Cluster Buildings" in which faculties have agreed to accept a minimum of ten student teachers each quarter upon request. With exceptions made for specialized fields such as Speech Pathology and Special Education, all students are placed in these Cluster Buildings. This results in a major commitment of time, talent, and facilities from the principal and the faculty. They vote annually to decide whether or not to continue as a Cluster Building. If enough faculty members are not dedicated to the dual commitment of instructional excellence for students and teacher education, a change is made. In even the largest centers, it is easy for college personnel to become well acquainted with faculties and programs when they are concentrating on a few outstanding buildings in a district with this kind of commitment.

Financial Support for Center Programs

Through the CMTEC structure described previously, each Center has $10.00 per student teacher to use on pre-service and in-service professional activities. The district coordinator and the center coordinator cooperatively decide how this money will be used following guidelines established for the total program. Providing opportunities to learn teaching analysis skills, obtaining programs dealing with human relations, purchasing professional materials for long-term use, and bringing national leaders to present seminars and share ideas are typical ways the $10.00 fund is used.

Occasionally several centers will cooperate to provide a program appropriate for all of them such as conducting a workshop on skills of working with student teachers or possibly forming teams to study problems or make recommendations that affect a larger population. More often, however, programs are presented directly in the center for the benefit of student teachers and faculty who are working there.

Center Coordinator

In each Center, a Center Coordinator is appointed by the college to assume responsibility for the program there and serve as a liaison between the college and the center. This person is a full time college faculty member who is well acquainted with the total teacher education program on campus. He works closely with District Administrators to cooperatively plan appropriate programs and activities for that particular center. Special duties of the Center Coordinator include:

- Cooperatively developing the student teaching program within the center with district personnel
- Working with district administrators in developing an inservice program for supervising teachers such as workshops in supervision or providing extension classes for them
- Representing the college in the center, especially in relation to any disciplinary action that might be necessary for student teachers
- Coordinating the activities of all college supervisors within the center and providing them with assistance
- Coordinating all college field experiences within the center
- Informing the Director of Student Teaching and consultants of developments and problems within the center
- Meeting with groups of teachers, administrators, and parents
- Consulting with the district coordinator in making student teaching assignments
- Interviewing student teachers and making arrangements for their initial visitation in the center

District Coordinator

The District Coordinator is a key center administrator designated by the superintendent to work with the Center Coordinator as a team to improve the program in any way possible. He delegates responsibilities to appropriate personnel, communicates effectively about the program throughout the community, encourages faculty to participate in teacher education activities, provides facilities and resources to enhance the program, identifies candidates for the joint appointment positions, demonstrates his own interest and dedication to teacher education through his professional activities, and makes decisions for the district concerning the program.

Joint Appointment College Supervisors

Joint Appointment College Supervisors in CMTEC Centers are carefully selected, outstanding supervising teachers who leave their classroom teaching responsibilities for a period of time to serve as college supervisors. They remain on the district payroll with all the tenure, insurance and other benefits continuing throughout the joint appointment assignment, but are also listed on the college faculty without direct compensation from the college. Rather, the college contracts directly with the district for these services.

Joint appointment supervisors work closely with the Center Coordinator in developing the student teaching program within the center. However, their primary responsibilities are in cooperating with supervising teachers to observe, confer, and help student teachers in every possible way. They file written reports following every formal observation, make recommendations, video tape, and at the end of the assignment, they

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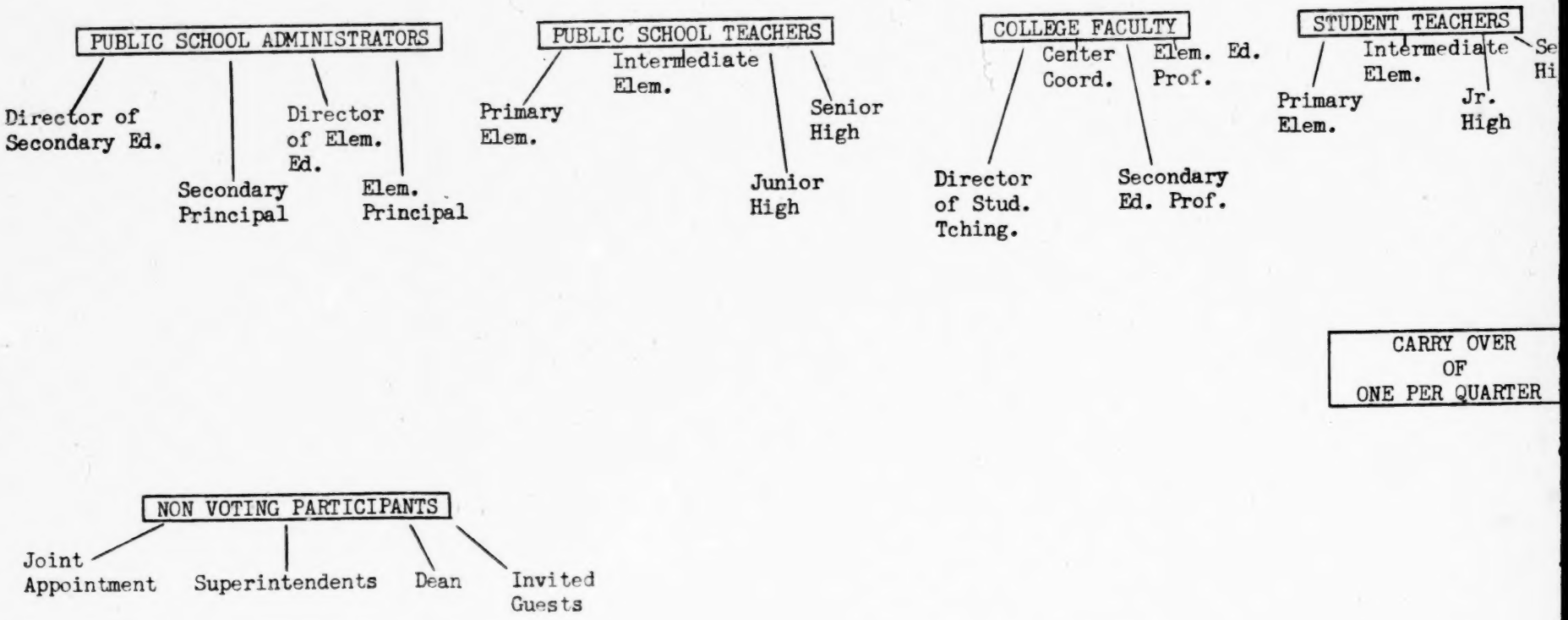

Figure 2.

compile final evaluations that are placed in the student's placement file. They are urged to request assistance from the Center Coordinator and college consultants to supplement their observations, and recommend changes they believe would improve the student teaching experience.

By choosing outstanding supervising teachers for this position, thorough knowledge of district resources and personnel is readily available to enhance the program. In addition, they have the respect of their fellow faculty members to provide an effective working relationship, and have opportunities to share ideas and serve as examples of good teaching throughout the district.

Teaming their skills with those of the supervising teachers gives student teachers the advantage of one providing teaching analysis expertise while the other provides depth in subject matter. The Center Coordinator adds another dimension by sharing his talents along with an understanding of the campus-based program. Consultation among all of these professionals is an on-going process.

College Consultants

In an attempt to provide a closer link between student teaching and the methods classes besides supplementing the subject matter depth provided by supervising teachers, consultants are named from academic departments on campus to also assist with the supervision process.

These consultants are asked to serve in an advisory capacity in any manner that will benefit the student teaching program. They frequently visit centers with college supervisors to observe student teachers in classrooms and confer with supervising teachers. They are available to discuss professional problems concerning their specific areas with student teachers, supervising teachers and college supervisors.

Consultants sometimes conduct group meetings with supervising teachers to share ideas about their programs and how they affect student teachers. Several program changes in the schools and on campus have resulted from meetings of this type. Selected supervising teachers have been invited to present guest lectures and demonstrations on campus as a result of these sessions.

Advisory Councils

One of the most productive outgrowths of CMTEC Centers has been the development of Advisory Councils, in which representatives from the various pre-professional and professional groups involved examine existing programs and policies, recommend changes and develop new programs.

These councils are organized differently in the centers, varying from informal discussion groups to highly organized representative structures. In one center, equal numbers of student teachers, supervising teachers, center administrators and college faculty make up the Teacher Education Advisory Council. (See Figure 2) In another center, the Center Coordinator was simply placed on an already existing faculty committee that was challenged with studying teacher education issues.

Already many changes are seen as a result of the Advisory Councils. In one case, a new graduate course was cooperatively designed and taught as a sequel to the basic supervision course. A two-week pre-student teaching experience was implemented in which students have an opportunity to observe and participate in organizing a classroom during the pre-school workshop and first week of classes in the fall.

Much time is spent trying to improve understanding and communication between the college and public schools. Faculty exchanges, visitations, group meetings, more effective written communication and cooperative projects are all ideas being considered and developed at various levels. Providing a greater variety of experiences, more flexibility in assignments, and more meaningful experiences also receive a great deal of attention from Advisory Councils.

Advantages of CMTEC Centers

Justifying the existence of CMTEC Centers and urging greater support for program development and expansion of the center concept is not difficult when one considers the following advantages:

- A sense of unity among center and college personnel has developed because of the basic CMTEC structure in which policies and goals were cooperatively developed and implemented
- Funds available for professional activities provides a way of adding meaning and depth to the major field experience in the teacher education sequence
- Joint appointment supervisors have a thorough knowledge of district resources and personnel, as well as the community, which can be used to provide improved experiences. This knowledge, paired with the Center Coordinator's understanding of the college based program provides double advantages for student teachers
- When professionals are involved directly and on an equal basis in problem solving and making recommendations, they develop a greater sense of identity with and a responsibility for a program
- Public school administrators become more interested and involved in teacher education activities by serving on committees or councils within their particular districts, and sharing ideas equally with college administrators
- College consultants provide extra depth in subject matter to supplement and support the expertise of the general college supervisor and the supervising teacher
- College courses for graduate credit, or on a continuing education basis, can be offered in a center more readily when the demand for the service is great enough to justify an instructor, extra travel, time, etc.
- There are opportunities for faculty exchanges and cooperatively developed programs emerging more easily
- It is easier to use video tape and other special equipment when there is great enough demand to keep the equipment readily available on site.
- Because student teachers are clustered, it is possible for college supervisors to maintain closer contact with them during their assignment, and be more readily available when problems arise
- It is more economical to get college faculty members to visit student teachers and become involved with a center when larger numbers of students are there
- Student teachers who are working closely together have opportunities to discuss, evaluate, and share ideas with each other easily, leading to deeper analysis of one's actions, more ideas for presenting lessons, and more opportunities to solve problems with help
- Supervising teachers who work regularly with student teachers learn to apply more skills of analyzing instruction that help student teachers more objectively and meaningfully

- Supervising teachers learn to use another professionally trained adult more effectively to improve instruction and provide more services for students
- Supervising teachers who are willing to work regularly with student teachers become more involved, interested, and dedicated to the whole process of teacher education, thus becoming better informed professionals in teacher education
- College supervisors have other professionals readily available with whom to share ideas and talents, discuss problems, ask for assistance when they need it, and learn and practice new skills
- Before drastic or unusual action is taken concerning a student teacher, several professionals have been involved and usually agree on the procedure
- It is easier to adjust assignments, move a student teacher or make other changes when supervisors know and appreciate each other and understand the program better
- Problem solving becomes easier in a non-threatening way when a true team concept is practiced. Focus is on solving the problem rather than trying to decide who is right or wrong

Challenges

Regardless of the many advantages of any program, there are always areas in apparent need of improvement besides numerous problems to be solved. In CMTEC Centers, the following seem to emerge:

- Because student teachers are clustered in only a few centers, it is easy for other school districts to feel by-passed, sometimes causing feelings of antagonism and jealousy. There needs to be some role or service for those districts that qualify for an active part in the teacher education process
- There are still a few cases of strongly administration-controlled centers where teachers do not have the voice they need in decision-making and policy establishing procedures for student teaching. In these cases, one usually finds teacher interest in the program at a fairly low level
- Centers and Center Coordinators sometimes become competitive in developing programs. Emphasis needs to be clearly placed on program development for the unique needs of a particular center rather than on comparison between them
- Methods and other pre-student teaching instructors need to know and understand the distinguishing features of each center in order to present the information to students factually and objectively
- There is a need for better and more continuous communication between instructors who receive feedback on the student teaching experience and center coordinators in order to use the information to improve the program
- Communication with parents needs to be improved in order to answer their questions and resolve their concerns about the role of student teachers in classrooms. More emphasis should be placed on the advantages of continuing student teacher services in the instructional program for students.

Future Directions

Within each center there is a constant challenge to improve instruction, offer more help to student teachers, provide more opportunities to learn self-analysis skills that will promise continuing growth as student teachers become professionals, and provide more services for teachers and administrators within a center.

Certainly there must be greater involvement at the state level on quality control consultant services, program development and communication. Emphasis must be placed on improving those aspects of CMTEC Centers that are not highly effective presently, and expanding the outstanding features to a broader population than just the central Minnesota districts in which programs are operating now.

Possibly Teacher Education Centers serving the state rather than just one college is the direction to go. These centers would have the advantage of resident supervisors who would provide supervision to college students from all over the state regardless of their college affiliation. It would be less expensive to the colleges and to the state with quality control built into the design. Seminars, conferences, and in-service education could be more realistically provided because of the larger number of college students and supervising teachers working consistently in close proximity.

The State Department of Education and other agencies would be better able to have greater impact on the quality of Teacher Education programs. High quality Teacher Education programs are seldom developed within a state without the full cooperation of the state department, professional organizations, colleges, universities, and public schools. Possibly the Teacher Education Center Concept holds the key to this kind of cooperation.

Bibliography

Center Descriptions - All appear in Innovative Programs in Student Teaching edited by Edelfelt, Roy A., Maryland State Department of Education, 1969.

1. Maryland - pg. 107
2. Kanahua County - pg. 128
3. Atlanta Area - pg. 100